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### **Women, Insecurity and Violence in a Post-9/11 World, by Bronwyn Winter**

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Bronwyn Winter. *Women, Insecurity and Violence in a Post-9/11 World*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2017. ISBN 978-0-8156-3502-4.

In this new monograph, Winter is grappling with the question of the significance of the impact of 9/11 and its aftermath on women: whether to stress the particular ways in which violence and insecurity have intensified due to the so-called “war on terror,” or whether to highlight that life, for many women, was already violent and insecure. Winter at times seems unsure as to the extent she actually intends to answer the question. There are several passages where the question is stated, then problematized, then defended, then dismissed. It seems the specific impact of 9/11 and its aftermath is more of a hook, a jumping off point from which to explore the various manifestations of gendered violence around the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rather than close the book with conclusions as to whether 9/11 is epoch-defining, marks an intensification of women’s insecurities, or acts to distract us from longer-standing causes of violence against women, Winter again notes it is “impossible to know exactly how 9/11 ‘shook the world’ and what it changed, if anything for women” and offers instead her reflections on identities, intersectionality and activism. While those looking for a specific argument might thus be disappointed, others might feel this unproblematic, because Winter has much to say on the state of the world’s women, drawing from her decades-long activism and scholarship in contexts as varied as Palestine, Paris, and the Philippines.

One learns for example that the US is using the war on terror framing in order to increase its military presence in *La Triple Frontera* (tri-border area) at which Argentina meets Paraguay and Brazil. Such military exercises threaten to exacerbate pollution of the Guarani Aquifer, one of the largest underground freshwater reserves in the world, which currently supplies fifteen million people in the region. US interests may extend beyond security to commercial

interests in the water supply, as well as Bolivian gas, undermining food and water sovereignty with potentially devastating impacts on those who are assigned the role of social provisioning and care. Through examples such as these, Winter draws attention to the importance of material well-being and economic rights when exploring women's security, a core strength of the book.

Another novel contribution is the discussion of the invisibility and even silencing of lesbian voices and activism within the peace movement. In the most recent incarnation of "the war is the emergency, women's rights can wait," lesbians are told their rights will be addressed later. The marginalization of lesbian voices is argued to have increased in the post 9/11 context, as the tense polarization around Islam has made it difficult for feminists to take a stance against examples of homophobia perpetrated by Muslim states or movements without being considered and labelled puppets of the west. Winter offers a vivid personal account of the challenges she faces navigating "the jagged rocks that threaten any moment to appear... to scuttle our fragile solidarities." The attention to intersectional identities, intercutting injustices and the challenges they pose for feminist activism is another strength of the book.

The style of the book is conversational, with Winter using the question "where is the post 9/11 world?" in order to provide a twisting tour of the less frequently examined sites of post 9/11 gendered insecurities, from *La Triple Frontera* and Djibouti to Turkey and China, and reflexive, with many insights drawn from decades of feminist activism. The structure is not intuitive, as some chapters set out to cover themes such as global governance, whilst others are closer to case studies of particular events or geographical areas. These two stylistic features mean that the book's suitability as a course text is not immediately obvious, but individual chapters could be used in teaching courses relating to gender and global politics.

The most obvious audience, however, is feminist scholars and activists who will find it a useful overview, with provocative reflections about identity and activism, of the many ways that insecurities and violence have intensified, particularly for some women, since 9/11.

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### ***Notes on Contributor***

Claire Duncanson has been a Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Edinburgh since 2009. Her research interests are related to gender, peace and security. She is the author of *Forces for Good? Military Masculinities and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Palgrave Macmillan 2013); *Gender and Peacebuilding*, (Polity Press 2016); and co-editor with Rachel Woodward (Newcastle University) of the *Palgrave Handbook on Gender and Military* (Palgrave Macmillan 2017).